

Saddam Hussein

The Fighter, the Thinker and the Man

CHAPTER 8

By Amir Iskander

Translated by Hassan Selim

Development for the sake of man

As well as being the science of change, revolution is also a constant dream of change. Revolutionaries are those who persistently struggle to make their dreams a reality, and the revolutionary who loses his ability to dream simultaneously loses his ability to struggle. A dream achieved becomes a firm reality, which must be surpassed by new dreams and struggles. The tasks of the revolution are never-ending, and there will forever be new and distant goals for which the revolutionary must strive.

True revolutions always have an overall role to play in the process of change. There is no such thing as a strictly economic, political, social or Cultural Revolution, as each is inextricably linked to the other, and cannot occur in isolation. A true revolution affects all aspects of life, and gives new form to all elements of the social structure.

This it does in a way, which harmonizes with its objectives, with the new level of social development, and with the hopes and aspirations of the revolutionary vanguard. A true revolution is one where the priorities are to change man himself, to bring forth his hidden talents, and to provide the means whereby he can make a positive contribution to building his life and being master of his fate.

It is true that the revolution may first concentrate on specific fields, such as the political organization of the state or the reformation of the society's economic relations. Its work, however, is unlimited until perfection is reached, and indeed, such perfection is the standard by which its success, its seriousness, and its continuity can be judged. Nowhere have there been more revolutionary and socialist movements in contemporary history than the third world, Arab countries included. Some have had a false ring to them, whereas others, in the best of circumstances, have been of good intention, but failed to realize that the revolution worthy of its concept cannot be selective and restrict itself only to certain areas whilst ignoring others. The natural and logical outcome, no matter how much, how long, or how little they withstood and resisted the internal corrosion, has been breakdown, collapse and fall.

The truth of the matter is that however good the intention, or however sincere the will to build socialism, society cannot be changed by economic measures alone.

Concepts, ideas, and ancient traditions and customs do not automatically and spontaneously fall just because certain economic steps or material changes, no matter how broad, have been affected. In exactly the same way, no propitious efforts to enlighten can achieve their objectives against the ideologies of exploitation and underdevelopment if they do not use these material changes as their basis. The new man of the living revolutions is the product of this creative interaction between material revolution and spiritual and Cultural Revolution. Concentrating on only one of these, even supposing it were possible, is to digress from the overall aims of the revolution, and to slide in an economic direction producing no more than statistical figures, or in a direction which, although promising, is no sooner stifled by the demands of the material reality. Saddam Hussein's profound awareness of this fact is clear when he says that "reactionary and right-wing principles are only a real threat when they become law, and when they alter the material state of the people's social and "cultural reality (I)". He is evidently referring to the disease, which eats away at other "revolutions" as reflected in the discrepancy between their words and actions,

between their principles and their applications. "Talking about revolutionizing foreign policy and political relations with the national movements at home is useless if the social reality does not change in accordance with the principles, and only when the economy is put to this use, can such change occur. So what is the point of talking about socialism when class structure remains, and when people stay hungry and live without stability? What value do principles have if a workingman is suddenly struck by a debilitating or crippling illness and has no guaranteed source of income or no state health care? (2)" The aim, therefore, of eliminating exploitation by means of state control over "sharing" the basic means of production is "to direct the activities of society, and to establish and provide the economic and social requirements for making the Arab capable of an extraordinary contribution to forming new human relationships on a world-wide scale, as well as to make exceptional use of his hidden strengths in order to build his cultural experiment! (3)".

But how can these relationships be built without including threads from the old relationships? The ancient manners and customs which still prevail, not only in Iraq, but throughout the whole Arab world, are mostly derived from the social structure of Arab society, which suffered the forces of occupation, colonialism and imperialism, and has also been affected by semi-feudalism, and sometimes despotism. Its weave also contains threads from the remnants of tribal, Bedouin and sectarian society. Even when dominated by the various but weak Arab capitalist systems, the very nature of this Arab society only allowed the worst of their values to spread, namely those of selfishness and egocentricity.

Purging our new social structures of such base values, and returning to our own pure values with a contemporary and revolutionary spirit in harmony with the stage of building society over the last quarter of this century, exacts from the true revolutionary no less, and perhaps more effort, toil and struggle than in other more clearly defined fields, such as economics, politics, and international relations.

The strenuous efforts exerted by Saddam Hussein in this respect thus acquire meaning and import. We shall not discuss all his intellectual endeavors and practical decisions here, but deal instead with two fundamental areas in the field of socio-human change, which express the ultimate aims of the Cultural Revolution taking place within Iraq:

A) The general position in Arab society as a whole on the woman's issue reflects the nature of its different material and cultural structures. Its essence varies quantitatively from country to country, with the exception of the Arabian Peninsula and Gulf Emirates, where the differences in outlook are more qualitative.

In order to show the extent of social backwardness vis- a-vis the position of the Arab woman in general from both intellectual and legal aspects, it will suffice here, perhaps, to take the case of Egypt, which is considered more socially advanced than the other Arab countries. The man has the absolute right in matters of polygamy and divorce, and is supported in this by the society's laws and legislations. Statistics say that only 4% of Muslim men in Egypt have more than one wife, but that, in one year, between 7.2 % and 8 % of those already married marry again. This confirms that polygamy is more prevalent than the general figure would suggest. These same statistics also show that polygamy is a major reason for divorce, and the main factor in 20% of divorce cases.

This figure, however, is for the whole of Egypt, and we should not forget that the instances of divorce in the large towns are much greater than in the small towns and the countryside. In Cairo, 42 % of couples divorced, whereas in Alexandria only 35.5% did so (1978 statistics).

It may not be insignificant to point out the violent reaction caused by certain attempts made in 1974 to reform aspects of the marriage and divorce laws. Demonstrations erupted on the streets demanding that discussion of these laws be stopped, and accusing the Minister for Social Affairs-ironically enough woman-of atheism and apostasy. Is this event not a sharp indictment of the extent to which the Arab cultural structure in general is backward?

Saddam Hussein is fully aware of all the dimensions of this situation, and says: "To disregard the objective circumstances is to distort the matter, as is using the existing conditions as a justification for hindering progress. Discussions on the woman and her role in society, and our attitude towards it must be balanced (4)." What, then, is this balanced attitude? According to Saddam Hussein:

"The intellectual guidelines and working theory of our party show that social change is not achieved by laws alone, but by painstaking work, by mass mobilization, and by detailed knowledge and correct usage of the laws which change society. This must be done by a capable leadership, which accurately pinpoints the areas and the sound formulae for the liberation of woman. The process will then be carried out with the utmost possible revolutionary action, and society will tolerate and absorb the maximum within its objective and revolutionary movement. The aim of the latter is to change society, and to preserve the true revolutionary balance, so that the movement and action required remain undisturbed as they surpass the various customs, traditions and frameworks, and transcend the formal bourgeois concepts of freedom (5)."

But does this mean not resorting to legislation to protect the rights of woman? Of course not.

Saddam Hussein says: "In our assessment, the position of women must be rectified by law. Such laws, however, must not be tossed aside at a later date to divide public opinion and provide the reactionary right with a magnet by which to attract people from the revolution (6)." He therefore believes that the introduction into society of a new convention to substitute the old will facilitate the task of subsequent legislation. How, then, should this new convention be formed?

"Strengthening economic position of women with the use of laws and social conventions is part of the process of women's liberation. Similarly, tightening up the present divorce laws, and widening the educational scope by providing equal opportunities for men and women are also part of the same process. Even more important is that woman liberates herself by actively working and making a serious contribution to building society. (7)

Here we reach the essence of Saddam Hussein's logical train of thought on the matter: "In accordance with our beliefs, the total and radical liberation of women is achieved by liberating the entire society, politically, economically and culturally, as this provides the objective condition for the liberation of women, and frees them from the chains of backwardness and retardation (8)."

Liberating woman from her bonds is only achieved by doing the same for man, and both will only be liberated by and through the liberation of society, for can anyone who is himself un-liberated grant freedom to others?

B) The problem of illiteracy in Arab countries is undoubtedly one of the most urgent and pressing problems in the social, political and economic development of the Arab structure. Ever since we opened our eyes to life around us we have all felt the humiliation of this shame so detrimental to our society. We would read statistics published by international organizations or even certain local bodies, and feel shock and despair at the figures. We would listen to the large number of people in our country that talked of socialism, and feel nothing but astonishment and surprise, for

how could there be nationalization of factories, banks and other organizations without nationalization of human knowledge? How could there be talk about redistributing material wealth when it is not preceded, accompanied, or even followed by a fair distribution of human wealth? As all socialist schools and doctrines claim, is not man the most valuable capital, for who is it that builds this socialism? Can civil servants, bureaucrats and technocrats build any true socialism without the active, not outward, participation of the masses, which have the first and last interest in any socialism? How can they actively participate when they have no knowledge of the basic alphabet or of basic arithmetic? Is it not all an intended falsification and obliteration of the depressing facts about our Arab society?

The few following figures on illiteracy (taken from a report by the UNESCO Training Center on the development of Arab society) will give some idea of the true picture: Egypt 70 %, Tunisia 68.7 %, Libya 76 %, Algeria 78 %, Sudan 86.5 %, Morocco 86 %, Saudi Arabia 95%, Jordan 67.6%, Lebanon 13.9%, Kuwait 47.1%, Syria 60.8 %. Figures for the Gulf States and Emirates, fortunately for them, are not available.

Let anyone look at these figures, and then talk about development and joining the modern age as much as he likes, and no one will listen. Let him talk about our past heritage and civilization, but no one unfamiliar with history will believe him. Today's world does not savor classical poetry, only understands the language of scientific and economic power, which leads to independent military power, and is only interested in seeing giant rockets sending 20th century man to walk on the moon.

It is beyond man's imagination to think there is an Arab, whatever his political position or intellectual beliefs, who is not filled with true pride when he reads the law passed in late 1978 by The Iraqi Revolution Command Council concerning the national literacy campaign, affecting one sixth of all Iraqis, and programmed over only three years.

It goes without saying that we are referring here to the great political, social, economic and cultural value of this law. It is pointless to talk again about the nature of our age, sometimes described as the age of technology, and sometimes as the age of the masses, or to discuss its relationship with economic, social or cultural development, or its true democracy in more than its formal parliamentary sense. These are now all clichés, but the strange irony is that the media and constitutions of the Arab countries, as well as their party constitutions, never tire of repeating them.

However, the only country, which will take the initiative to wipe this shame from its forehead, is Iraq. Before the end of 1981, the Arabs, who for centuries have been shrouded in darkness, will shine like candles of hope on the road of the Arab revolution. The novel application of this law will undoubtedly allow Iraqi society to take a cultural leap forward. It will also inevitably lead to profound changes in all concepts, attitudes, customs, traditions and practices, whereby Iraq will be able to offer an inspired example to other Arab countries.

The only endeavors of this type, which have succeeded in other countries, have been those instigated by revolutionary parties un-stultified by bureaucratic organizations.

Perhaps the direct supervision of and strict adherence to the plan of these endeavors by the leading figures symbolizing these parties and revolutions played a vital role in firing national and popular enthusiasm, and in maintaining the initial level of zeal in the daily struggle towards enlightenment. This is what Castro, Mao, Lenin and Ho Chi Minh did, and what Saddam Hussein is doing today for the first time in the whole Arab world.

This is not a cultural revolution, but the same comprehensive revolution making inroads in one of its integral fields. This is because the leader has remained strong, struggling constantly against all adversity, and looking towards a bright future, voices persistently calling him to march forward to new and distant horizons.

Notes Chapter 8

- 1) Saddam Hussein, Unqulu Taqalid al-Hizb
- 2) Ibid.
- 3) Saddam Hussein, op. cit.
- 4) Saddam Hussein, ' An ath- Thawra wal-Mara' (On The Revolution and Women), Baghdad, Dar al-Huriyya, 1977, p. 78.
- 5) Ibid., p. 28.
- 6) Ibid., p. 43.
- 7) Ibid., p. 58.
- 8) Ibid., p. 26.